

February 1996

Electronic Journal Access for Libraries: What Some Companies Are Doing To Help-Part II

Frances C. Wilkinson

University of New Mexico

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wilkinson, Frances C. (1996) "Electronic Journal Access for Libraries: What Some Companies Are Doing To Help-Part II," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1863>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Electronic Journal Access for Libraries: What Some Companies Are Doing To Help — Part II

by **Frances C. Wilkinson** (Director, Acquisitions and Serials Department,
U. of New Mexico General Library, Albuquerque, New Mexico) <fwilkins@unm.edu>

The electronic journal (e-journal) brings dramatic implications for publishers, subscription agents, libraries, and the end users alike. Although no one has definitive answers, some of the issues and concerns connected with e-journals were discussed by several companies (**CatchWord**, **OCLC**, and **Elsevier Science**) in Part I of this article (*Against the Grain*, November, 1995). In Part II, subscription agents (**B.H. Blackwell**, **EBSCO**, **Dawson/Faxon**, **Readmore**, and **Swets**) share what their companies are doing to facilitate e-journal distribution to libraries, speculate on costs associated with e-journals, discuss archiving responsibility issues, and clarify their role in the e-journal marketplace.

Question 1) What project(s) is your company working on to facilitate electronic journal availability for libraries? (You may also wish to include information concerning publishers, special cooperative projects, etc.)

Answers from Amira Aaron, Academic Automation Specialist; Dan Tonkery, President and CEO; and Marilyn Geller, Internet Product Specialist, Readmore:

"In the same way that Readmore's advanced information systems allow us to process a variety of business transactions related to the acquisition and management of print journals, we handle all complexities of subscriptions related to fee-based electronic journals placed by our clients. Several programs and initiatives are now in place which are designed to provide value-added services to our clients involving the wide range of electronic information scenarios. On a regular basis, Readmore manages archives in a variety of electronic formats, digital information transfers, Internet mailing lists, gophers, and world wide web access to a number of electronic journals and online information resources."

Answer from Ronald E. Akie, Senior Vice President, Marketing, Dawson North America/The Faxon Company:

"We continue to provide the simplified, consolidated access that libraries expect from agents. We handle online journal subscriptions for publishers and libraries in much the same way that we handle traditional print and CD-ROM subscriptions, providing the order and payment processing and ongoing service for both parties. Of course, customer service requirements for electronic journals are different, so we have instituted a staff education program about new electronic media, which includes having publishers discuss their

products directly with our staff.

"At present, electronic journal delivery follows the print subscription model, with the publisher delivering electronic issues directly to the customer. As electronic journals proliferate, clients will likely seek a centralized access point and publishers will want to streamline their service and distribution. These are areas where agents can continue to provide value."

Answer from Chris Beckett, Business Development Manager, B.H. Blackwell of Oxford, England:

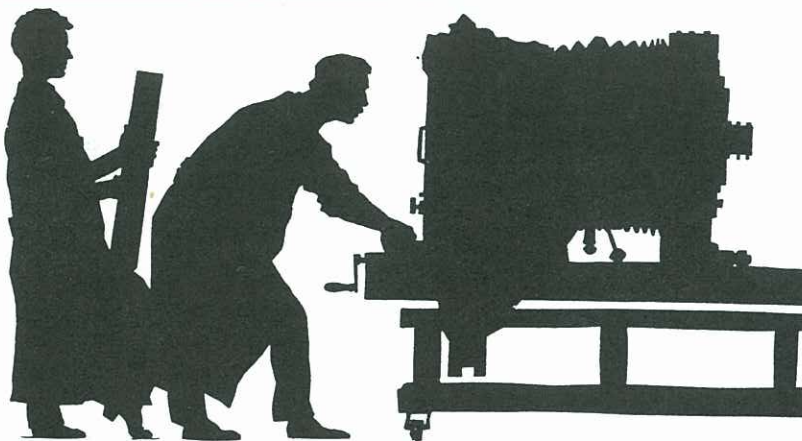
"Of particular relevance to this discussion is B.H. Blackwell's participation in **Project DALI** (Document and Library Integration), a European funded project that seeks to explore the relevance and use of Z39.50 and the ILL protocol to provide seamless delivery of heterogeneous material in any format, to a single unified catalogue interface. The lead partner in this project which runs from Jan. 95—Dec. 96 is **FD Systems** in the UK, developers of the **Oracle Libraries Package**; other partners are the **Institute of Oceanographic Sciences**, the **University of Sheffield**, **University College**

Dublin, **Kyros Systems** and the **University of Thessaloniki**. **Kluwer**, **Taylor & Francis**, and **Elsevier** are contributing material to the project. Blackwell sees project work as an increasingly useful way of learning about different organizations' needs and thinking concerning the challenges we all confront. Our customers are libraries and publishers and our core function

is to provide a service to both groups that meets their different needs appropriately and effectively, and thereby provide a single point of coherence to two diverse customer communities. Blackwells has always found participation in industry bodies such as **SISAC** (Serials Industry Systems Advisory Committee) and **ICEDIS** (International Committee for Electronic Data Interchange for Serials) of great benefit and we have therefore adopted a similar approach to project work over the last 3 years.

"A project such as DALI enables Blackwell not only to better understand the needs of our two different customer bases, but also to get fast track access to current and relevant technology. More generally, we have dedicated in house project teams looking at how our systems need to migrate and develop to best meet the needs of our customers. As part of that process, we are carrying out in-depth market research and evaluation to ensure these developments result in relevant services that build on and enhance our intermediary

continued on page 26



Electronic Journal Access from page 25

function. I would like to be more specific in this area, but we have an instinctive dislike of vaporware and so I can only say watch this space.

"Lastly, I would mention that Blackwell's relationship firstly as joint owner and now as marketing agents for UnCover has always provided us with useful insights into end user behavior and requirements and how these are integrated with the requirement that libraries retain a key pivotal role as information intermediaries."

Answer from Tim Collins, Division General Manager, EBSCO Publishing:

"EBSCO Information Services has been providing access to electronic versions of journals since the late 1980's. This is when our publishing division, EBSCO Publishing, began adding ASCII full text from journals to their family of CD-ROM products. EBSCO Publishing is a leading provider of electronic information to the school and public library marketplace and is now focusing efforts on providing electronic versions of appropriate journals to the academic marketplace.

"Through EBSCO Publishing, EBSCO currently provides access to over 1,000 journals electronically. EBSCO has secured electronic rights to nearly 2,000 titles and is in the process of creating a product for the academic marketplace which includes full text of hundreds of academic titles. This product will be available in 1996. The ASCII full text is, and will be, combined with indexing and abstracts to 3,500 journals (created by EBSCO) and table of contents citations from over 11,000 titles to form comprehensive research databases.

"EBSCO Information Services, which is the group comprised of EBSCO Subscription Services, EBSCO Publishing and EBSCOdoc (our comprehensive document delivery company), has developed a client/server, Z39.50 compatible, online service which provides online access to these journals via the Internet. This service, EBSCOhost, is fully operational and supports thousands of library terminals accessing journals electronically. With Window and terminal interfaces, this system provides electronic access to journals through dumb terminals and PC Windows machines.

"In the late 80's and early 90's, EBSCO focused on providing ASCII versions of journals electronically as the capability to receive electronic images was not widespread. However, as the delivery technology has now progressed, EBSCO is building a database of images from over 1,000 titles and will provide electronic delivery of these images via EBSCOhost in 1996.

"We are currently able to deliver articles via mail from virtually any journal through our EBSCOdoc document delivery service. Our goal is to provide articles from as many journals electronically as possible and we are in the process of reaching out to the publishing community to increase the number of titles for which we have the right to do this."

Answer from Albert Prior, Production Development, Swets Subscription Service:

"We at Swets are involved in a number of initiatives to facilitate electronic journal availability for libraries. The earliest activities were probably in the mid-80's when we developed services to handle the newly emerging CD-ROM subscriptions for our customers. This was of course predominantly relating to the publication of secondary information. It involved close contact with CD-ROM publishers and the creation of help desk and technical support services for our customers.

"The extension of that now has been the facility for customers to use the Internet to access secondary databases held on servers at Swets, to supplement access to local CD-ROMs. Our first contract

for this was with SilverPlatter for a number of their databases and we are now in discussion with other companies to add not only further secondary databases, but also now the full texts of a number of journals.

"In recent months a number of scholarly publishers have announced the introduction in early 1996 of parallel publishing of electronic versions on the Internet of their print titles. These include for example Chapman and Hall, the Institute of Physics and Carfax. We have been in discussion with these publishers to ensure that our administrative systems are in place that enable customers to access these electronic versions as smoothly as possible. There will, I am sure, be further similar announcements from the publishers in the coming months.

"In the UK, three major STM publishers have now signed contracts with the Government's Higher Education Funding Council for their titles to be made available to academic institutions under a UK-wide pilot site license agreement. The higher education institutions will be able to get all the serials of these publishers at lower prices and in a variety of formats, including electronic. There will be specially agreed terms for the use, copying and dissemination of the journals involved. Discussions have been held with these publishers to ensure that these new site license agreements and the access to electronic versions can be implemented as smoothly as possible for our library customers.

"During 1995 we have also been approached by individual libraries and networks of libraries to join with them in pilot projects which involve the delivery of serials information in electronic form and the evaluation of the impact of electronic titles on libraries, end users and agents. We are likely to start shortly with two key projects in this area. For some time now our Electronic Tables of Contents Service, SwetScan, has been a valuable tool for our customers in enabling them to fully exploit the content of the journals they subscribe to or maintain an awareness of titles in peripheral areas of interest. SwetScan covers some 14,000 titles and we have seen that new electronic capabilities mean that we can offer our library customers services which enable their readers to be informed rapidly of key developments in their fields.

"On a broader level, we are taking steps to develop an integrated approach to the longer term delivery of electronic scholarly information, rather than interim ad hoc solutions. We are seeing more and more that in the future electronic environment, there will be the need for the intermediary who can handle the variety of formats offered by publishers and provide a range of services which will be as pertinent in the future as now. We are currently developing a service which will enable us to handle varieties of electronic formats and delivery methods from publishers, and offer customers integrated access to electronic journals — in effect a type of electronic warehouse or distribution system. In this respect we are evaluating a number of systems on the market and talking to publishers and libraries about their needs. Not only will this provide a real service for our customers but it will also help us consolidate our position as an intermediary in the electronic scholarly information systems."

Question 2) What costs associated with electronic journals will be incurred by all players; specifically what will library prices be like and how will they compare with print journal prices?

Answer from Amira Aaron, Dan Tonkery, and Marilyn Geller (Readmore):

"Although this point has been discussed in many fora, no one can truly answer the question yet. Retooling and retraining are heavy costs for libraries, vendors and publishers. With this as a given for all parties involved, it seems unlikely that costs will

continued on page 28

Electronic Journal Access from page 26

decrease in the near future. However, the electronic environment offers a larger range of "packaging" options for institutional subscribers, and this may be the key to pricing charges. Our industry is still at the stage of experimentation with economic models of pricing electronic journals and all segments must remain flexible as we search for fair and equitable pricing methods."

Answer from Ronald E. Akie (Dawson/Faxon):

"At present publishers, libraries and agents alike are in an investment phase as we acquire necessary resources and skills — hardware, software, staff training, data conversion, etc. No single electronic journal subscription pricing model has evolved, and current models largely use print prices as a base. In some cases, both print and electronic are delivered at a 20 to 30 percent premium over the print price. In others, subscribers receive a 10 percent discount if they forego print. And in a few cases print is no longer offered.

"These print-based models will be transitional. Electronic journals generally provide users substantially more value than their print counterparts in full-text searchability, related discussion groups, pre-publication information and access, and Internet links to related content. Pricing models should accurately reflect this value from the users' perspective.

"As electronic availability transforms access patterns, we may see more transaction or use-based pricing — by search, by article, or by issue. The industry has not yet had sufficient experience to evolve a definitive pricing model that incorporates these factors and offers a smooth economic transition from more traditional models for both producers and consumers. But market forces will ultimately prevail."

Answer from Chris Beckett (Blackwell):

"Blackwell's view is that the product of commercial publishers will not be rapidly replaced by free, or very cheap, net-based publications. Therefore, this answer essentially addresses the pricing policies of the existing dominant suppliers. Clearly, electronic co-publishing of existing print product involves significant extra investment by publishers and their suppliers, such as typesetters. While this parallel publishing process persists, we believe publishers are inclined to price at, or just above (105-115%), the current paper product price. However, on the other hand, having invested significantly to produce electronic facsimiles of the paper product, some are adopting aggressive marketing strategies for their electronic products in order to get market exposure and grow share. Electronic titles from publishers adopting this approach are often free or heavily discounted. Such discounts are unlikely to persist once market exposure and share have been achieved. So, we will soon be back to the existing pricing model and associated cost for libraries.

"The majority of electronic publishing currently is in fact electronic distribution and remote printing with the value-added being limited to searchability, speed of access, and access independent of location. All these are important; however, the true value-added potential of electronic publication will only emerge when titles cease to be facsimile parallels of paper journals and begin to contain multimedia components. When this happens, the cost and pricing link between electronic and paper becomes dislocated; we suspect most publishers are unclear what pricing models they will then adopt.

"How to migrate from paper to truly electronic publishing presents publishers with very real challenges in a number of areas — not least pricing. There are also challenges for agents who will incur costs in acquiring and holding more information about electronic

product such as format, delivery, and hardware requirements. In addition, customers (both libraries and publishers) look to Blackwells not only for information about product, but also for technical and content advice. This is already the case for CD material, which is why Blackwells has developed a dedicated CD-ROM service — **CD Complete**, which provides all the usual information about CD's but also technical, networking, hardware, and content information and advice. Blackwells will supplement this with similar services for electronic journals. The infrastructural cost to the agent of this is not yet clear; however, for traditional agent services, we would not anticipate this resulting in significant additional charges."

Answer from Tim Collins (EBSCO Publishing):

"As the copyright holder, the publisher will control the price of electronic journals. Intermediaries will need to provide hardware, software and technical support to facilitate electronic access, and the portion of the subscription price allocated to these intermediaries will need to increase. This will likely result in a larger price to the subscriber but the additional search and retrieval functionality provided should justify the anticipated increase in price. Having said this, the factor which will most significantly affect pricing for electronic journals will be the extent to which this new delivery format erodes the print subscription base. Publishers need to maintain existing overheads to create quality journals and therefore, price reductions for electronic products will be unlikely as publishers will need to add revenue so that they can cover existing cost plus fund the research and development necessary to provide this electronic access."

Answer from Albert Prior (Swets Subscription Service):

"Handling information and publications which are increasingly in an electronic format presents us with different internal and external procedures and systems, for example in terms of customer service, product knowledge and technical support. Costs for us, therefore, are in developing new systems, acquiring appropriate hardware and network facilities and training staff in the new areas of expertise which are increasingly required.

"In terms of prices of electronic serials, it is of course the publishers who set these prices and I believe that many publishers are still open minded with regard to solutions for their long term pricing arrangements. They are testing the water and gaining feedback from their customers. Some are setting subscription surcharges of between 10 and 40 percent for the provision of an electronic or Internet version of their print titles, whilst others make no additional charge."

Question 3) How will electronic journals be preserved/archived; who should assume the responsibility for their preservation including electronic "refreshing" and/or moving them to new media?

Answer from Amira Aaron, Dan Tonkery, and Marilyn Geller (Readmore):

"The archiving of printed journals has always been the domain of the library. In the electronic environment, it seems redundant for each subscribing institution to take responsibility for the storage and preservation of materials that can serve many from one centralized location, and we find an increasing number of archiving options. Publishers with resources to draw on will choose to be the archivist of records in some cases. Library consortia will be involved in the assignment of archival responsibility among their members. One can make a good case for the role of the subscription agent providing archival services for electronic materials thus serving both the publisher and the library community. In whatever

continued on page 29

Electronic Journal Access
from page 28

scenario develops, the problem is not technology, but rather the larger ongoing issue of cooperation and commitment."

Answer from Ronald E Akie (Dawson/Faxon):

"We expect that the future, borne on the wings of rapidly developing technologies, will provide more than a single model in this arena, but libraries will generally serve as access centers rather than archives. Because the printed page is immutable, publishers could safely let libraries serve the archival role in a paper-based world. They are, however, more concerned about integrity of the text and copyright in electronic media. At the same time electronic technologies have shifted libraries' focus from archiving to access, and few not-for-profit institutions will want to support the technical infrastructure necessary to be an electronic archive.

"Some publishers may prefer to archive and refresh electronic journals at their own sites, while others will look for service providers to handle these tasks. We can envision subscription agents providing these services to publishers, while also serving as a centralized access point for libraries."

Answer from Chris Beckett (Blackwell):

"We do not believe that most publishers have any great desire or willingness to undertake the archiving function except on a limited basis. The national libraries have perhaps the clearest mandate, although I understand that their investigations have shown the costs to be considerable. Large, higher education institutions globally may be able to provide the necessary technical infrastructure; however coordination of this globally is a significant challenge. At this stage, we believe a secured archival infrastructure, as **John Tagler**

so succinctly described it, will only be achieved through cooperation. Agents may have a role here in coordinating access to archives maintained by individual publishers for quite recent material as well as actually archiving the older material and other material publishers are unprepared to archive. This will be a significant cost and this will need to be recouped."

Answer from Tim Collins (EBSCO Publishing):

"There is not a clear answer to this question. The last several years have seen some technologies become more and then less popular for access. Paper seems to remain as a preferred archival technology over CD-ROM and local hard disc storage. Significantly lower cost of hard disc storage may change this. If there were a steady demand for access to archival information electronically, vendors and publishers would naturally gravitate toward insuring electronic journals were "refreshed" and made available in the latest media as they would see profit potential in this activity. However, as the market demand is primarily for relatively current information, I am not convinced that older data will be converted into the newest formats as the commercial incentive may not exist for vendors to perform this function. Therefore, for the time being, I think librarians should continue to purchase paper subscriptions to those journals for which they require permanent storage."

Answer from Albert Prior (Swets Subscription Service):

"Preservation and archiving of electronic journals are areas which will need a lot of consideration and discussion and in everyone's rush to the brave new world these elements have probably not yet been given the full attention they deserve. I believe we shall see a mix of systems in which publishers will in some cases assume this responsibility whilst others will make arrangements

continued on page 30

The State of the Art

...working
smart



*Information industry leaders
in providing subscription
services, article delivery and
library automation software.*

REMO® Mouse driven serials management system.

ROSS® Online ordering, claiming and searching of journal and publisher databases.

RENEWAL EXPRESS PC-based system to analyze current serials holdings and plan for future collection development.

FINANCIAL PLANNER Lotus formatted worksheet to analyze previous spending history and plan future budget allocations.

UNCOVER The fastest most comprehensive service for fax delivery of journal articles available today.

BACKSERV/BACKMED An Internet list solely devoted to the informal exchange of serial back issues among libraries.

READMORE ACADEMIC SERVICES

700 Black Horse Pike • Suite 207 • Blackwood, NJ 08012
Phone: 1-800-645-6595 • Fax: 609-227-8322

with suppliers and intermediaries, or possibly national libraries. In the development of our services we see this as an option that we would plan to offer to publishers."

Question 4) What do you see the subscription agent's role to be in the electronic journal market; what are possible future trends in this area?

Answer from Amira Aaron, Dan Tonkery, and Marilyn Geller (Readmore):

"In addition to the ongoing processing of traditional materials, librarians are facing an increasing array of electronic resources to be selected, acquired — paid or free, retrieved, prepared, cataloged, presented, and archived. In this transitional period, Readmore will build on the types of services which we have always performed to help libraries deal more efficiently and effectively with new formats and platforms of information. Economies of scale allow us to provide important processing options for librarians such as consolidation of payment and licensing, transaction processing, training, filtering, selection and mark-up of materials, maintenance of links and ongoing quality control, cataloging, development of front ends and retrieval systems, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) services, and archiving.

"Readmore plays an active role in its contacts with the range of publishers who are developing pilot projects and initiatives. In some cases we are working with publishers whose projects are not yet available for general dissemination. Readmore and other serial vendors will continue to work as a link between publishers and libraries and to influence electronic publishing, access to electronic journals, and copyright development for the benefit of the library community and the scholarly information chain."

Answer from Ronald E Akie (Dawson/Faxon):

"Agents will continue to provide value to libraries and publishers by streamlining access and distribution. Libraries will continue to want single-point access and consolidated ordering and payment. Publishers will find that the setup and customer service requirements of electronic journals are different but not less than for paper journals. As electronic access drives publishers to compete more on the quality of their content, most will continue to seek agents' help in managing its distribution in whatever media. Electronic information technologies offer all of us more, not fewer, opportunities to provide added value to those we serve."

Answer from Chris Beckett (Blackwell):

"Blackwells sees a fundamental and increasing need for intermediaries to provide coherence and sense to an increasingly incoherent universe of information. The agent, book jobber and library have all historically provided such points of coherence, albeit to different constituencies and for different classes of materials. Agent's traditional skills and functions in providing a single point of reference, control, advice, customer service and financial management will need to be applied just as rigorously to the electronic journal as the paper one.

"We anticipate offering new services in the area of site license management and administration — again, providing coherence and uniformity to the various licensing models currently being offered by primary and secondary publishers. We also anticipate, in some markets, a need to provide a one stop shop not just for information about information (our current role) but also a single point for both access and delivery of primary material. The multiplicity of formats, interfaces, delivery and pricing models are complicating rather than simplifying matters. Customers have already shown

interest in some organization resolving these problems for them. It seems to us that agents are as well or better placed than many other "players" to do that. Blackwells sees our role here expanding not contracting given our unique understanding of both publishers' and libraries' needs. Developments in end user computing, high bandwidth networks and the convergence of publishing and document processing technologies offer interesting opportunities and challenges.

"Players in the existing information chain from author to reader may take advantage of these technological opportunities to redefine their roles. These changes are unlikely, in our view, to be earth shattering — rather, they will be a redefinition, extension or migration of function at the margins of existing players' activities. Thus, authors may become publishers, some publishers may persuade some libraries to buy direct from network delivery or licensed mounting, secondary publishers may provide access to primary content, libraries and university presses may cooperate and try to bypass all existing intermediaries. Agents may get involved in delivery and content mounting in addition to current services. All these are technically possible, the trick is to identify and pursue what is probable and viable. And the best way to do that is to extend dialogue and cooperation with our customers, both publishers and libraries. I'd like to thank *Against the Grain* for giving us the opportunity to achieve this. If any publishers, librarians or other intermediaries would like to discuss these issues further, please contact chris.beckett@blackwell.co.uk + 44 1865261313."

Answer from Tim Collins (EBSCO Publishing):

"Subscription service agents have been effective intermediaries between libraries and publishers for decades and the advent of electronic journals does not diminish the need for such an intermediary role. Libraries prefer to deal with one agency rather than thousands of publishers and publishers prefer dealing with several agents rather than thousands of libraries. However, this is clearly a time of change and the role of the subscription agent will undoubtedly change. EBSCO has taken the approach of being very active in the technology so that it can continue to add value to its customers in this new electronic age. We have positioned ourselves to provide the online service with which libraries can access electronic journals by developing EBSCOhost. We have been providing electronic access to journals via our EBSCO Publishing CD-ROM products since the late 1980's. We also provide the service of allowing libraries to buy subscriptions to electronic products produced by others. EBSCO processes orders for thousands of CD-ROM products and numerous online journals. At EBSCO, we consider ourselves partners with libraries and publishers and will continue to develop services that we feel benefit these parties."

Answer from Albert Prior (Swets Subscription Service):

"As electronic information proliferates there will be the need for the intermediary who can provide a service to save users time and to make access as easy and efficient as possible. Nothing dictates that this should be the existing subscription agent. However agents have long established and close links with both libraries and publishers so it is likely they will be the ones to develop such a role, assuming they take the necessary steps. They will continue to offer benefits such as a single source for inquiries and payments; they will increasingly be involved with licenses and negotiations with publishers, possibly with password administration, and with help on what electronic information is available and how to access it. They will act as electronic distributors and pointers to electronic sources; they will provide user interfaces and search systems. They will provide help to smaller publishers who want to move into electronic publishing and they may well be more involved in copyright control and collection of royalties. These will all involve the agent in developing new services and areas of expertise." 